

When God's People Suffer: From Suffering to Healing

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 00] Job 42, it's on page 542, and Kirsty is going to come and read for us there.

Okay, Job chapter 42, verses starting at verse 7. After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, I am angry with you and your two friends because you have not spoken of me what is right as my servant Job has.

So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly.

You have not spoken of me what is right as my servant Job has. So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shu'ite and so far the Temanite did what the Lord told them and the Lord accepted Job's prayer.

After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before. All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house.

[1 : 22] They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought upon him and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring. The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first.

He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. And he also had seven sons and three daughters. The first daughter he named Jemima, the second Keziah and the third Keren Hapuk.

Nowhere in all the land where there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers. After this, Job lived 140 years.

He saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. And so he died, old and full of years. Hang on, hang on. Well, there's sheets and pens going round.

And if you want to make use of them, you can take notes. So we get to the end of Job.

[2 : 52] And thankfully, after many weeks of lots of suffering, suffering turned to healing and celebration.

And that's what we're going to be thinking about. So have your Bibles open there at Job chapter 42. And we'll just ask for God's help as we look at this together.

Let's pray. Our Father God, we thank you for this great book.

The life story of a man who suffered much. Thank you for all that it has been able to teach us and instruct us.

And we pray now that, again by your Holy Spirit, you would be teaching us afresh and helping us to see with fresh eyes the wonder of the new creation, of the healing that you bring to your people that is found in Christ.

[4 : 15] So please encourage us all today. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, Snow White, Hansel and Gretel, Sleeping Beauty, do you remember them?

Some of the great fairy tales that I'm sure you've all heard. But do you remember how they all finish? And they all lived happily ever after.

That's what makes them great stories. That's why children love to listen to them. And that's why parents love to tell them to their children. It's what we all dream of.

Because we all know what happily ever after means. It means the end of all the bad things that break and destroy our lives. And it means the end of all the suffering, heartache and pain.

But the problem is that they are just fairy tales. They're not real tales. Real life does not always end happily ever after.

[5 : 27] During these weeks of going through Job, the book that I've mentioned to you before, A Place of Healing by Joni. As a teenager, she suffered a terrible accident, which has left her in a wheelchair for over 40 years, paralysed from the neck down.

Listen to what she says about her desire for things to end well. Through all the years of my paralysis, I have longed, yearned, ached, wept and prayed for God's healing in my broken body. After 40 plus years in a wheelchair, however, I have settled into the realisation that in his love, sovereignty, far-reaching, perfect, but often incomprehensible plan, he has chosen to gently but firmly say, no child.

Not now. Not yet. In fact, rather than discovering healing in her life, there seems to be more suffering in her life.

Throughout the book, she tells how she's now dealing with excruciating pain, and in the epilogue of the book, she tells how she's just got news of breast cancer.

[6 : 52] It seems that real life is not a fairy tale. Real life does not always end with and they all lived happily ever after.

But there is a story. It's not a fairy tale. It's a true story where everything does end happily ever after. Again, listen to Joni on this, as she thinks about happily ever after.

Children seem to know. They realise that the world is full of wolves, trolls and big bad bears.

They're aware that things aren't quite right, that's something wrong with the world.

And we all want, we long, for that time when we will live happily ever after. When the prince will finally kiss us and we will wake up from this strange dream and enter true happiness and joy forever and ever.

That's why faith in Jesus Christ is so satisfying, so fulfilling, for only in Christ is every longing fulfilled. every hope realised, every yearning for peace and wellbeing finally answered.

[8 : 15] In Christ is the culmination of that classic struggle and the defeat of all things evil when our wonderful Saviour will right every wrong and the Prince of Peace will be our King of Kings.

There is a happy ending ahead. The true story of Job that we're looking at tells us what that happy ending is.

In fact, the ending of Job in some ways is also our story. It's our story because it's the Gospel story. Because what happens to Job is a picture, it gives us a glimpse of the ultimate healing that is yet to come where God's children will live happily ever after.

And in the epilogue of Job, these last few verses, we are given three pictures, or I've put together three pictures, that guarantees our ultimate healing.

The first picture is this, that is about the suffering of Job and the sacrifice of Jesus. Job, as we've seen through the book, has suffered terribly.

[9 : 37] And to add to his personal grief and pain, he had three so-called friends who came along and for 21 chapters, they add insult to injury.

This was their so-called comfort or wisdom to Job. This is, in a nutshell, what they were saying to him. They were saying, God punishes sin. Job, you're suffering.

Therefore, Job, you need to repent so that you can be healed. But the reality is, as we've been seeing, that Job is actually innocent.

He has done nothing wrong. Look at what God has to say about this in verse 7. 42. Chapter 42, verse 7. After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphuz the Temanite, I am angry with you.

My judgment is upon you and your two friends because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. You see, it's not Job who's been in the wrong.

[10 : 42] It's the three friends who have been in the wrong. They are the ones who actually deserve to suffer. They're the ones who are guilty. They're the ones that have spoken wrong against God.

Now, you place yourself into Job's shoes. After all of these things that have happened, how would you treat these so-called friends after everything they've said and done?

Go on, secretly, what would you like to do to them? Hmm? Pull their fingernails off one by one or something? Hmm? Well, how Job responds to his friends is actually a picture of how Jesus responds to us.

Look at the middle of verse 8. Look at how he responds to them. Middle of verse 8. My servant Job will pray for you and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly, to your sin. You have not spoken of me what is right as my servant Job has. So Eliphaz, the Temanite, Bildad, the Shu'ite, Zophar, the Naamathite did what the Lord told them and the Lord accepted Job's prayer. [12:03] You see, how Job responds to his friends in this instance is a picture, I think, of how Jesus responds to us. Job has been the innocent one.

Yet he is the one who prays for his friends. He acts on this occasion almost as a mediator between God and the friends so that they can be forgiven.

Look what it says in the middle of verse 8. So that God will not deal with them according to their folly. They deserve to suffer.

They deserve God's anger, as it says in verse 7. But in turn, they are shown mercy and grace. Now whenever we suffer, one of the first complaints we make is, God, that's not fair, or it shouldn't happen to me.

As if somehow we have a right in this world not to suffer. As if something about our lives says that we should never have trouble or hardship.

[13:07] But the big surprise as we've seen through the book is not that we suffer, but why is God so gracious and merciful with us when we have rejected and rebelled against God so much?

The question is not why do we suffer, but why do we not actually suffer more when we see the lives that we live? Like Job's three friends, we deserve so much more, but yet God responds with grace and mercy to his people.

He doesn't treat us as we deserve. And this is the beauty of the gospel story. These are the things we long to read about and are true when we look at God's word.

Job's friends had to make a sacrifice. We see that in verse 8. The seriousness of their sin is seen by the cost involved.

Verse 8. So they are to take seven bulls and seven rams. Go to my servant Job and make a sacrifice, a burnt offering for yourselves.

[14:24] Now an offering like this was loaded with symbolism. The friends would take this animal, one of the animals, and they would place their hands on the animal as an act of identification.

And then symbolically, not literally, it's like my sin being transferred to this animal. So that what happens to this animal should actually happen to me.

So when this animal dies, when that throat is slit and the blood pours, they are saying, this death is in place of my death.

I am the one deserving to die. That's what's going on with this sacrifice. But of course, all of this was to point forward to the real hero of the story who came to be our sacrifice, the complete sacrifice.

Jesus was the one who beyond Job was truly innocent and suffered. He never did anything wrong. But yet he entered into this suffering world.

[15:35] He came into this world to take my sin. He came to take your sin. He came to suffer the punishment that you and I deserve to suffer. And by faith, which is this act of identification again with the Lord Jesus, our sins are transferred from us to Jesus.

And if we could picture Christ on the cross, it's like we take the hammer and the nails and we crucify Jesus. With every blow of the hammer as the nails go into the hands and the feet, we are saying, this death is in place of my death.

I deserve to die. But yet we are forgiven. We are not treated as our sins deserve. Instead, we receive mercy upon mercy and grace upon grace.

This is the first step to our ultimate healing. as we find acceptance and forgiveness with our God and how we can live happily ever after.

The second picture is one of a feast. The feast of Job and the welcome of Jesus. Thankfully, Job's suffering, it didn't last forever.

[17:05] It soon turned to celebration. Verse 10. After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.

What an amazing turn of events for this man. His life has been completely restored and to celebrate, he throws a party, a great feast.

Verse 11. All of his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. and they comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought upon him and each one gave it a piece of silver and a gold ring.

What an occasion that would have been. After all the suffering, all of that heartache and pain, Job is in his home surrounded with his friends and his family celebrating God's amazing goodness to him. But what's incredible about this feast is Job is celebrating this feast with those friends because they're there too who had caused him so much trouble.

[18 : 19] Job has opened his house as it were. The welcome has been given and they are there welcomed in to eat and to drink with him. And again, I think it gives us a picture of how this feast of Job is like the great feast of Jesus who welcomes people like you and me.

We don't deserve to be there but yet we are invited and we are welcomed. It's as if Jesus has thrown open the doors of his home so that together we can eat and drink with him.

This picture of this feast is common through scripture and it's carried on through the Bible. Have a look at Isaiah chapter 25 it's on page 708.

Keep your finger in Job go to Isaiah 25 it's on page 708. Isaiah 25 starting at verse 6 On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples a banquet of aged wine the very best the best of meats and the finest of wines on this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all people the sheet that covers all nations he will swallow up death forever the sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all their faces he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth the Lord has spoken what a feast that is going to be and this feast in Isaiah is the same feast that Jesus promises to all who will come to him go to Luke chapter 15 it's on page 1049 the story is familiar the prodigal son the one who had left who had gone away and it gives us that picture of the son returning and the celebration and the feast that takes place we'll pick it up in verse 20

Luke 15 verse 20 so the son got up and went to his father but while he was still a long way off his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him he ran to his son he threw his arms around him and kissed him the son said to him father I have sinned against heaven and against you I am no longer worthy to be called your son but the father said to his servants quick bring the best robe put it on and put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet bring the fattened cap and kill it let's have a feast and celebrate for this son of mine was dead and is alive again he was lost and is found so they began to celebrate that's what the good news is that's what the gospel story is all about people like you and me who do not deserve to be there get welcomed in to join in the feast and as it was in Job to share in that feast was a sign of acceptance and belonging to join in that celebration is that seal of approval that you are forgiven that you are treasured and of course this feast of Job with his friends is a glimpse of that ultimate and final feast the feast of heaven with God's people a feast where like Job look at verse 11 of Job a feast like Job where we are comforted and consoled not by friends and family but by God our Father who wipes away every tear this is the feast that we have been welcomed to so this is the second step to our ultimate healing and how we can live happily ever after the third picture is one of the blessing of Job and the promise of Jesus

[23 : 05] Job's suffering does come to an end and he experiences a complete renewal and restoration look at verse 12 the Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first he had 14,000 sheep 6,000 camels a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys double everything that he had before and he also had seven sons and three daughters verse 16 after this Job lived a hundred and forty years he saw his children and the grandchildren to the fourth generation and so he died old and full of years how different this is to chapter 1 isn't it where he experienced the loss of his family the loss of all his wealth the ruin of his health this is a complete and utter reversal of what has happened in fact his life that he has now can't be compared to his pre-suffering days it's an amazing transformation now we've got to be very careful as we read this not to read in what we call a prosperity theology into this and by that

I mean the kind of teaching that says God rewards you and God is going to bless you if you do good things that's not what happens to Job look at verse 10 after Job had prayed for his friends the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before Job prays for his friends not for what he can get from God but because he loves his God there's no ulterior motive he obeys God because he simply loves God and wants to do what's right God never promised to Job Job look I know your friends have been pretty bad to you but if you pray for them if you could just bring yourself to pray for them I'm going to make you prosperous no he never says that there's no such promises Job does what is right and God in his grace gives him more than he could ever imagine this is not a reward for something good he's done this is just simply the extravagance of God's grace just as

Job's suffering is not a sign of a disobedient life so Job's healing is not a sign of an obedient life God responds in grace simply because of who God is not because of what we are or who we are but once again what we see happen to Job here and the blessing that comes to his life is a picture of what Jesus has promised to his people God in his grace has blessed us beyond our wildest dreams let's just take a look at what the risen Jesus has promised to his children let's go to Revelation chapter 21 at the very end the ultimate healing of Job comes at the end just as our ultimate healing will come at the end

Revelation 21 let's pick it up in verse 3 and picture this this is what is promised this is the blessing that is for all those who love and trust the Lord Jesus verse 3 and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying now the dwelling of God is with you and he will live with you and you will be his people and God himself will be with you and will be your God he will wipe every tear from your eyes there will be no more death there will be no more mourning or crying or pain no more Job stories to be told for the old order of things has passed away no more suffering no more heartache and he who was seated on the throne said

I am making everything new chapter 22 verse 1 we get another picture of what this promised life is going to be like 22 verse 1 then the angel showed me the river of the water of life as clear as crystal flowing down from the throne of God and of the lamb that's Jesus down the middle of the great street of the city on each side of the river stood this tree of life bearing twelve crops of fruit yielding its fruit every month a sign of prosperity and goodness and blessing and abundance but here it is and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations all suffering gone all that heartache and all that pain all the battles with sin all the trouble that we live with in the world the leaves of the tree are for the healing all gone a distant memory not even a memory all gone the blessing that

[29 : 42] Job experienced at the end of his life is going to be our experience this is what is promised to God's children this is what is guaranteed this is the third step to our ultimate healing and how we can live happily ever after the truth is we all love fairy tales because it's what we all dream of each one of us in our lives we long we yearn for our lives to be made better and for this broken world that we live in to be put right where evil is banished where suffering is no more and we all get to live happily ever after but thankfully there is a real story there is a true story where our dreams do come true that story is the story of

Job because through Job we actually get to see Jesus we see Jesus the God who sacrificed his life for our life the one who has prepared a feast for us and has welcomed us in to celebrate it the one who has blessed us and promised us and guaranteed a wonderful future of course God may choose to bless us now we may experience healing in some measure we can pray for healing in our lives and we should pray for healing but sometimes God answers no my child not now not yet but be absolutely assured of this God in his grace and mercy is upon you the Lord Jesus will keep you he is going to hold you in your hands he will not let you slip or let you fall he will bring you home you will feast with him you will enjoy eternal blessings together God's people will live happily ever after let's pray father we want to give our thanks to you for taking us through the story of

Job for helping us to face up to our suffering in whatever shape or form it is in our lives or will come in our lives we thank you for giving us the picture that you are the sovereign God with absolute power and supreme authority over all things and therefore we can trust you and we thank you today for giving us a little picture a little glimpse a little taste of our ultimate healing that is to come all because of Jesus Christ so we praise you we acknowledge you we say thank you and may this fill our lives with joy may it change us and transform us that there would never be an ounce of bitterness or anger with what we go through but we will continually look to you and praise you and thank you and find grace and mercy in abundance we thank you in Jesus name Amen